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CRAYON PORTRAITURE.

A USEFUL little treatise on this subject, by J. B. Crocker, has been sent to us for notice, and we can say without reserve that, for practical purposes—apart, of course, from a personal instructor—the amateur could have no better guide. Portraits in black crayon are often attempted by the would-be artist because of the comparatively effective result that can be obtained by the expenditure of little labor and less skill. The portraits we hint at are surreptitiously founded on what is known to the trade as a “solar print,” which, for this purpose, is a photograph faintly printed and enlarged to life-size from the portrait to be copied. The man who makes the solar print—which is usually on Whatman or other drawing-paper with “a tooth to it”—mounts it on a stretcher; and thus, at a cost of three or four dollars, the “artist” finds ready prepared for him the foundation of the picture for which he will, perhaps, get from twenty-five to fifty dollars, after he has gone over certain parts of it with the crayon tint, and worked up the details with a little point work by the aid of a few sittings from the original. In provincial towns—and much oftener, too, in large cities than is supposed—a great proportion of the crayon portraits executed from photographs are made in this fashion; and many persons even, who will indignantly deny that their work is anything but “free-hand,” will use a very faint solar print to save them the labor in sketching the outline and getting correctly the shadows of the face. We have been much amused on more than one occasion at the pride and delight of the family and friends of some young man, regarded by all of them as an artistic genius, because he had made a crayon picture which was instantly recognized by its faithfulness as a portrait. The author of the handbook before us says that “anyone of average intelligence can, after a little practice, learn to execute a crayon portrait of real merit.” Such a portrait as will delight a circle of village admirers who know nothing about art—yes. But a portrait of “real merit,” whether the medium be crayon, or anything else, requires more than the conditions of “average intelligence” and “a little practice.” The “solar print” enlargement method is not recommended by Mr. Crocker, who says truly that “an artist who works over solar prints exclusively does not rank with those who make a pure crayon portrait,” and pictures so made “fade more or less when exposed for some time to the light, or turn a reddish tint, and after a few years are worthless.”

Several ways of making an enlargement from a photograph are described:

A solar print may be obtained and used for tracing by blacking the back and tracing with a stylus. Another method is by procuring a negative from the photograph, and with a magic lantern throwing the picture upon a paper of the desired size, and tracing the outline in the dark with a piece of charcoal, after which it can be finished up by the photograph. In either or all cases draw the outline upon a piece of manilla wrapping paper in order that any necessary corrections or alterations may be made before transferring it upon the stretcher. There is also a system of squaring off a picture for enlargement which was much used by the old masters, and is used to a great extent among the artists of to-day. It consists in dividing the picture to be copied into squares of equal size, and drawing squares upon the canvas or paper as much larger as the desired drawing is to be larger than the picture to be copied. Then, whatever is seen in each square in the smaller picture, is to be drawn in the corresponding square upon the paper for the enlargement.

A good pantograph, which may be bought for about two dollars at almost any dealer in artists' materials, the author says, may be used for enlarging the outline from a small photograph; but we should recommend that the sketch be made without any such aid. The sketch, however, should be carefully drawn and all the necessary corrections in the outline put in, before beginning the picture itself; for frequent rubbing out will so destroy the surface of the paper that the shadows will look muddy and an artistic result will be impossible. The outline is transferred by rubbing the back of the paper with charcoal, putting the charcoal side face downward and tracing over the outline with a stylus or a hard lead-pencil, not bearing too hardly; and, after removing the charcoal surface of the paper from the stretcher and discovering the reproduced outline of the sketch, going over it slightly and very carefully with a small paper stomp charged with a little of the crayon powder artists call “crayon sauce.”

We quote, in conclusion, a few paragraphs to show the practical character of Mr. Crocker's instructions:

Take one of the paper stomps, put it in the brass holder, rub it thoroughly in the crayon sauce, twisting it around until it is entirely covered with the sauce on the point and tapering end; apply this first to the pupils of the eyes, the nostrils, and the line through the centre of the mouth. Next, with a broad stroke (not a sharp one) to the lids of the eyes, the dark shades in the ears and the eyebrows, following the outlines very carefully. The stomp having now cleaned itself somewhat is ready for the values in the face. In applying it to these shadows, do not use the point as you would a pencil, but rather with broad strokes. Tint the iris of the eyes, the shadows under the eyes, the curve in the nose and around the nostrils. Do this in little short strokes in one direction first, parallel to each other, afterward crossing them at an acute angle—never at right angles.

The shades in the cheeks and forehead are next in order, in the same manner. The work will appear rough and spotty at first, but these values are necessary. In shading the cheeks commence each stroke at the outline, working inwardly, and these may be curved slightly, hatching in the same manner at an acute angle boldly, yet so lightly that real lines are avoided. Look the face over thoroughly and put in all the darker shades, but not as strong as they will be required, as the work will look more transparent by gradually strengthening them, rather than in attempting to produce the proper strength at first.

Next, put in the values of the hair, not in fine lines, but in broad strokes, with the chamois stomp, but in this there should be no hatching. Make all the strokes in the direction in which the hair is combed. Leave the high lights as in the face, for the present. Watch the photograph closely, and put them on in the right place. In putting on any and all of these darker shades, either in hair, face, or drapery, always commence at the darkest part of such shadows and let the stomp move in the direction of the lighter.

Now turn to the drapery. A black broadcloth coat, or a silk dress, should be worked in the same manner, except it may be the latter can be finished a trifle finer. The drapery may be worked up with the chamois or paper stomp. The method of work is the same as above described—short broad strokes crossing at an acute angle, being careful not to make the strokes all one way. In ending off the drapery great care must be observed to have it grow lighter and lighter until it is lost entirely. It must not have the appearance of being cut off abruptly.

The background should be worked up in the same manner as the coat, only not so dark, or it can be put in with the chamois pad, slightly tinted with the crayon sauce, and applied with a circular motion, commencing at the coat and face, and working away from them, gradually growing lighter and lighter, having no abrupt ending. Never make the background around the entire head in a bust picture. Even if the subject has gray hair this is not necessary; it will have too much of a photographic appearance. Make the darkest background next to the highest light of the face.

Take the paper stomp, slightly tinted with color, and proceed to finish the eyes. Bear in mind that the method of applying this to all parts of the features should be in short strokes, very lightly crossing them at an acute angle, using care not to have them too oblique, and never at right angles. Begin with the upper lids, darken them slightly, and working upward and away from them toward the eyebrows. Strengthen the pupil all that is possible and proceed to tint the iris, making the upper part of it darker in shade than the lower, as there is always a shadow cast upon it by the eyelid. The lower lid should not consist of a line, but is formed by the shading above and below it.

There should always be a dark shadow under the eyebrows toward the nose; borrow from this to shade the sides. Put in the nostrils, using care to have them the proper shape, but not quite so large as the outline, as the remainder will work into a half tone when blending, and give the proper roundness. Work away from them now, giving the curves to the lower part of the nose, and blend the nostrils until the proper shape is produced. Carry up the tones toward the eyes and off slightly toward the cheeks.

In shading the hair only use the stomp in one direction, or back and forth if the crayon does not adhere to the paper well, and the effect will be seen at once. Endeavor to give the soft flow which hair should have. Avoid all lines, or any attempt to make individual hairs, as this would cause a hard and wiry appearance, and destroy the softness and beauty of the picture.

Do not make a hard line through the lips, but begin at the corners, making those the strongest, working from them with a lighter touch to the centre, where the greatest fullness lies, and at this central point there is generally a slight curve, which must be carefully preserved. Make the shadows, half tints, and lights, in exact imitation of the original. Avoid all hard outlines in the lips by working up to the outlines very carefully; in fact, there is not a single line in the whole face. Seeming lines or boundaries are caused by the sharp approach of light and shade.

Soften the hair where it falls upon the forehead, or where it joins the face about the temples. Do not be afraid of losing the line of where the hair commences, or the forehead begins. It wants to be lost. It must be soft to make the picture artistic and natural. Generally the strongest light on any picture is on the forehead.

If the subject should be that of an elderly face, many wrinkles will be noticed. These are put on boldly at first with the paper stomp in their exact position, after which soften them above and below with a clean stomp, and if too strong lighten them with a finely pointed rubber.

Remember there must be no distinct or abrupt ending of any shadow; each one must blend off gradually into the other, or into the high light. As a general rule the high lights should not be left with the pure white shade of the paper. They should all be tinted, although so lightly it will be almost impossible to decide whether they have received any tint at all.

Art Hints and Notes.

BEAUTIFUL little decorative panels can be made by painting in oil, with a free and sketchy hand, upon panels of polished maple. Let the wood serve for a background, for which its delicate color and delightful marking admirably adapt it. The tint of the wood lends a wonderful luminousness to the pigments laid over it, and harmonizes with any color scheme that may be employed. Figures in the vivacious French style are better adapted to this purpose than anything else, and single figures are better than groups. The panel should be painted if possible in one sitting, as it owes its brilliancy of color and touch largely to the absence of reworking, which is essential to the lighter order of decorative work. Some of the graceful figure designs by M. Penet, now appearing in *The Art Amateur*, will be found useful in connection with these suggestions.

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THERE are two styles of drawing in India ink. In one you begin with the lightest washes, and build up wash over wash, until you get a highly finished drawing; in the other you dash your subject in with broad free washes, producing an effect without consideration of the minor details. The first method secures more completeness but less spirit than the other, and of the two the latter is to be preferred. If a subject is worth a high finish it will require no more work to give it in color than in simple black and white, and you will learn more than you would by doing it in monochrome. The value, in art, of black and white is not to be underestimated; but, like that of the lead-pencil in literature, it is rather that of a vehicle for memoranda than for complete facts.

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GOOD drapery studies can be prepared by arranging an old sheet around a lay figure. The folds are soft and fall with the fulness and grace of the finest linen. Couture preferred old muslin, well washed out, to any other material for producing drapery forms of the antique mould, and he was certainly a judge.

* * *

WIPE your brushes out on a paint rag and dip them in oil when your work is done for the day. When you want them again wipe the oil off. Brushes so treated will last twice as long as those washed every day; but the washing is, after all, the best method of treating them to secure the certainty of clean tints.

* * *

AFTER scraping the palette clean, never leave the wood bare. Rub it well with linseed oil before mixing colors on it again. Otherwise it will absorb so much that you will find yourself continually betrayed into false combinations by the differences between the colors on the palette and those on the canvas.

* * *

SMOKE pictures are a popular artistic fancy. They are made by smoking a piece of glazed cardboard over a candle, wiping the half tones out of the sooty surface with a brush, which leaves a gray ground, and taking out the high lights with a pointed bit of wood.

* * *

RECENT experiments with tube white for oil painting, made by a local artist, have shown that Devoe's “yellows” less than the German white put up by Schoenfeld, and that Edouard's (French) white “yellows” more than either. Devoe's or Edouard's are generally preferred to the German as they have more substance. The latter color is ground so fine that its body is sacrificed in the preparation. It must be said that none of these whites “yellow” enough to impair materially the permanence of the pictures on which they are employed. All three are good, and their use is a matter of choice. Painters who like a thin and readily manipulated white prefer the German, and it is generally used in small pictures, which are painted with sables. For strong, bold work with bristle brushes, Devoe's white is to be recommended, and, diluted, it may be used for fine work.

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IN painting the figure you can have no better start than a good outline. Sketch your figure on the canvas with charcoal, and then draw it carefully in with the pencil, in broad but accurate masses. Spray this outline with common fixative, which will prevent it from rubbing away under the brush and will not impair the surface of the canvas, and paint over it. Thus prepared, you will never lose your drawing, and your picture will show no weakness or indecision from searching for the outlines.

ARTIST.